



Action for Healthy Kids®

Guide for Developing Policy Language

Policy Area 3:

Setting Nutrition Standards for All Foods and Beverages Available on School Campuses During the School Day

Local education agencies must establish standards to address all foods and beverages sold or served to students, including those available outside the school meals program. Many Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) State Teams have developed guidelines for foods at schools. This guide summarizes key learnings from those experiences.

The *Commitment to Change*,¹ a guiding document providing goals for creating schools that promote sound nutrition and physical activity, was developed by AFHK. As your district develops and implements your wellness policy, we encourage your consideration of the guiding principles from the *Commitment to Change*:

- Encourage adequate nutritional intakes and consumption of nutrient-dense foods, especially those nutrients in which children's intakes are often low (calcium, folate, iron, potassium, fiber, magnesium and vitamins A and E);
- Offer fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, 100% fruit juice, water, low-fat and nonfat, white and flavored milk in preference over foods and drinks of low nutritional value;
- Evaluate foods based on the overall nutritional quality using parameters that are of importance to children's growth and development;
- Serve foods with consideration toward safety, handling, packaging, taste and appeal to ensure high-quality meals;
- Provide comprehensive, preferably daily, physical education for children in grades kindergarten through 12;
- Implement physical education, nutrition, and health education curricula that emphasize enjoyable participation in physical activity, healthy eating habits and food choices, and that help students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills, behavioral skills, and confidence needed to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles;
- Provide physical activity instruction and programs that meet the needs and interests of all students, including those with illness, injury, and developmental disability, as well as those with obesity, sedentary lifestyles, or a disinterest in traditional team or competitive sports; and
- Ensure that children learn practical, life-long lessons about the balance of good nutrition and physical activity.

As part of your wellness policy, along with nutrient standards for foods sold outside of the school meal, schools must ensure that reimbursable school meals meet program requirements and nutrition standards. Use the Nutrition Environment Assessment to help determine areas for policy development:

Nutrition Environment Assessment

- ☐ List food and beverages offered outside of the school meal program, include unit sizes, cost and selling prices.
- ☐ Identify and list when and where foods/beverages are offered.
- ☐ List the type, unit size and cost of beverages/foods available from distributors used by district/schools.
- ☐ Gather and review policies for school activities and events that provide food to students.
- ☐ Assess your district's beverage and vending contract language – does it affect bringing in healthier food and beverage options? Does the contract allow for flexibility? Note all information that may impact nutrient standards for foods and beverages. List restrictions and identify offerings.
- ☐ Examine state review and school meal program and then list areas noted for program improvement.
- ☐ Assess barriers to participation in school meals such as facility needs, mealtime schedules, bus schedules, recess, open-campus, overt identification, meal prices, and communication and marketing efforts.
- ☐ Assess current professional preparation criteria and ongoing professional development expectations for food-service staff.

After the information has been collected, use the online Wellness Policy Tool found at www.ActionForHealthyKids.org/resources/ along with this Policy Language Guide.

1. The *Commitment to Change* document is based on over eight government and professional reports regarding best practices for school nutrition and physical activity. It was developed with the AFHK Partner Organizations for the 2002 Healthy Schools Summit. For the full document, visit our website at: http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/devel/about_history.php

The elements in this document have been part of nutrition guidelines and recommendations created by AFHK State Teams. Suggestions and links to resources can help your team prepare policy language.

Nutrient Standards for Foods Outside School Meal

Nutrient Density

Evaluate foods based on their overall nutritional quality rather than a single nutrient. Encourage consumption of nutrient-dense foods. Emphasize foods that the 2005 Dietary Guidelines suggest encouraging (vegetables, fruits, low-fat/nonfat dairy and whole grains).

Replace less nutritious beverages with more nutrient rich beverages such as real fruit and vegetable juices, and low-fat and nonfat white or flavored milk. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends eliminating sweetened drinks in schools. <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;113/1/152>

Use the food label Daily Value (DV) guide to evaluate nutrient density. 5%DV or less is low for individual nutrients, 20%DV or more is high for individual nutrients. <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html>

Added Sugar

Added sugars refer to sugar added during processing or preparation and supplies calories but few nutrients. Added sugars *do not include* naturally occurring sugars found in fruits, vegetables and milk.

HealthierUS School Challenge, a USDA Team Nutrition program, sets criteria for total sugar in individual foods (outside the meal programs) at 35 percent of weight or below. Some develop standards for total sugar in individual foods using percent of sugar by calories; then, add an exclusion clause for nutrient-dense foods such as flavored milk. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/criteria_instructions.pdf

Increasing the palatability of nutrient-dense foods/beverages with added sweeteners can promote diet healthfulness. Drinking flavored milk can increase students' calcium intakes. The extra nutrients, compared to other sugar-sweetened drinks, make flavored milk a nutrient-dense beverage. http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/SID-5303FFEA-7B999320/ada/hs.xsl/home_4255_ENU_HTML.htm

According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines, small amounts of sugars added to nutrient-dense foods, such as breakfast cereals and reduced-fat milk products may increase intake of these healthy foods. <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter7.htm>

Caffeine

It is recommended that children avoid caffeine. Excessive caffeine can cause anxiety, insomnia, headaches or stomach irritation. Soft drinks, including non-cola drinks, may contain caffeine. Chocolate milk has trivial amounts of caffeine. http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/SID-5303FFEA-7B999320/ada/hs.xsl/home_4672_ENU_HTML.htm

Fat Calories

The Dietary Guidelines fat recommendation for an individual diet is between 20 and 35 percent of calories. This recommendation applies to diets as a whole, not individual food items. <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter6.htm>

HealthierUS School Challenge sets criteria for total fat in individual foods (outside the meal programs) at 35 percent of calories or below. When developing standards for total fat in a food item, you can use percent of calories from fat. Consider having an exclusion clause for nutrient-dense foods such as nuts, seeds, peanut butter, nut butters or cheese. Although these foods may be higher in fat than some other foods used as snacks, they can be superior because of their nutrient content. www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/criteria_instructions.pdf

Saturated Fat Calories

When developing standards for saturated fat in a food item, you can use percent of calories from fat. HealthierUS School Challenge's criteria for saturated fat in individual foods (outside the meal programs) are 10 percent of calories or below. Consider having an exclusion clause for nutrient-dense foods such as nuts, seeds, peanut butter, nut butters or cheese.

Non-Nutritive Sweeteners

Children over the age of two who eat a well-balanced diet may occasionally use foods and beverages sweetened with non-nutritive sweeteners. The estimated intakes of non-nutritive sweeteners in children are below the established acceptable daily intakes for all approved sweeteners. Foods/beverages using non-nutritive sweeteners can help reduce the calorie content of foods and beverages.

http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/SID-5303FFEA-7B999320/ada/hs.xsl/home_3794_ENU_HTML.htm

Sodium

Specific levels for sodium in school meals or individual foods have not been set. Most processed foods are high in salt and sodium. To minimize risks associated with high sodium intake, focus on promoting potassium-rich food groups, such as fruits, vegetables and dairy.

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/html/chapter8.htm>

Serving Sizes

Beverages

Consider limiting serving sizes of nutrient-poor beverages rather than nutrient-rich beverages such as low-fat and nonfat milk.

Consider The American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for appropriate quantity of fruit juice consumption.

<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/5/1210#Recommendation>

Foods

Check the number of servings in the food package and consider offering only items that are packaged as a single serving. <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html>

HealthierUS School Challenge has criteria for portion sizes for food items sold outside the school meal program. Portions are not to exceed the serving size of foods served in school meal programs. For vended items, some are considering the recommendation to limit calories to 200 per package/container. In addition, consider an exclusion clause for nutrient-dense foods such as nuts, seeds, peanut butter, nut butters or cheese.

www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/criteria_instructions.pdf

Time, Frequency, Location, Price

It is important to promote and market healthful choices by:

- Promoting nutrient-dense products in kid-appealing packages;
- Offering nutrient-dense products in many locations to make them easy to choose;
- Limiting nutrient-poor/calorie-dense items so that they will not compete with school meals;
- Competitively pricing nutrient-dense products;
- Establishing times and frequency that foods and beverages are available.

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/pdf/approach4.pdf>

It is also important to apply nutrient standards to all foods served on school campus – this will include before, during and after school events.

Other Activities

Celebrations

Encourage activities, instead of eating, during school celebrations. If food is part of the celebration, avoid conflict with mealtime, insure food safety and serve appropriate portions. Include limits on parties so they occur no more than one time each month and also promote healthful foods and beverages.
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/school%20celebrations.pdf>

Concessions, School Stores, Vending

Provide high quality nutrient dense foods that are competitively priced. Note that USDA regulations permit schools to market milk anytime and place – regardless of existing contracts (Fed. Reg. 70:223).
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/concessions.pdf>
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/school%20stores.pdf>
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/vending.pdf>

Consider the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation to offer 100% fruit juices, water and low-fat, nonfat white or flavored milk, in preference to sweetened drinks.
 AAP Policy Statement: Soft Drinks in Schools, *Pediatrics*, 2004: 113(1): 152-154.

Consider standards that categorize snack items as good, better, best choice and list the allowable serving sizes/item. Many AFHK State Teams have developed guides – visit <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org> and select *Resources to Improve Schools*.

Fundraising

Consider non-food items or healthy foods for fundraising activities. Use activities such as fun-runs/walks, jump rope contests, etc.

Fundraising that requires selling nutrient-poor calorie-dense foods and beverages conflicts with developing and maintaining healthy habits.

<http://www.kidseatwell.org/LocalWellnessPolicy.html>
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/fundraising.pdf>

Rewards and Incentives

Consider offering non-food rewards and incentives.
 Offer nutrient-rich foods in appropriate portion sizes if food is used as a reward or incentive.

<http://www.kidseatwell.org/LocalWellnessPolicy.html>
<http://www.eatsmartmovemoreenc.com/tools/rewards&incentives.pdf>

Contracts and Agreements

Encourage contract language that:

- Discourages over consumption by eliminating incentives based on the amount of soft drinks sold per student;
- Limits the number of machines with nutrient-void sweetened drinks;
- Provides for vending of nutrient dense beverages and foods.

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/Making-It-Happen/pdf/approach2.pdf>

School Meals

Barriers to Participation

Ensure that students have access to school meals, adequate time to eat, are not overtly identified as eligible for free and reduced price school meals.

Promote the school meal program and healthful choices utilizing communication and marketing techniques.

Assess the cafeteria facility and consider improvements to ensure participation in the school meal program.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Parents/lunch.html>

Professional Preparation and Development

Provide criteria to ensure that the foodservice staff:

- Has the knowledge and skills to provide nutritious, palatable and safe meals and food and beverage options;
- Stays current on child nutrition issues.

<http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Certification.aspx?id=1009>

<http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Credentialing.aspx?id=1021>

http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/competencies_nfsmi_materials.html

http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/competencies_managers_rev03.pdf